

ORIGINAL

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ADDRESS

By

C. EVERETT KOOP, M.D., Sc.D.

SURGEON GENERAL

OF THE

U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



PRESENTED AT THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

WASHINGTON, D.C.

OCTOBER 29, 1988

(GREETINGS TO HOSTS, GUESTS, FRIENDS, ETC.)

IT IS A GENUINE HONOR FOR ME TO BE HERE THIS EVENING AND TO JOIN YOU IN OFFERING CONGRATULATIONS AND APPRECIATION TO THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY.

I LOOK OUT ON THIS DISTINGUISHED AUDIENCE AND I KNOW THAT YOU ARE HERE NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE OFFICIAL NATURE OF THIS OCCASION -- THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING -- BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT YOU AND I ARE HERE BECAUSE WE BOTH SHARE A DEEP AFFECTION FOR W.H.O. AS AN ORGANIZATION ... FOR THE PEOPLE WHO OPERATE ITS MANY PROGRAMS ... AND ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE THOUSANDS OF HUMANE AND COMPASSIONATE PROFESSIONALS WHO LABOR EVERY DAY IN THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES AND TINY SETTLEMENTS THAT DOT OUR GLOBE.

AS MOST OF YOU KNOW, I SPENT A HALF-CENTURY OF MY OWN PROFESSIONAL LIFE AS A PEDIATRIC SURGEON, HEALING AND REPAIRING THE TRAUMA AND THE DAMAGE THAT CAN OCCUR IN NEWBORN INFANTS AND LITTLE CHILDREN.

I WAS ONE OF A FEW INDIVIDUALS WHO TOOK UP THE SPECIALTY OF PEDIATRIC SURGERY WHEN IT WAS A NEW IDEA. AND NOW, AS I LOOK BACK ON THE EXPERIENCE, I AM VERY HAPPY THAT I DID.

BUT EVEN AS I WAS SO DEEPLY ENGAGED IN PEDIATRIC SURGERY, I WAS ALSO PAINFULLY AWARE OF THE LIMITED CONTRIBUTION I AND MY COLLEAGUES WERE MAKING TO THE ALLEVIATION OF SICKNESS AND SUFFERING AMONG CHILDREN -- NOT ONLY AMONG THE CHILDREN OF OUR OWN COUNTRY BUT OF CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD.

MANY YEARS BEFORE MY APPOINTMENT AS SURGEON GENERAL I OFTEN TRAVELED TO OTHER COUNTRIES AND OTHER CONTINENTS TO MAKE SOME CONTRIBUTION -- HOWEVER SMALL -- TO THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN.

I HOPE IT MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF THOSE CHILDREN WHOM I CARED FOR DURING THOSE BRIEF INTERVALS. BUT I DO KNOW THOSE EXPERIENCES MADE A VERY GREAT DIFFERENCE IN MY OWN LIFE.

FOR ONE THING, IT MADE ME A TRUE BELIEVER IN THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ... THE NEED TO MULTIPLY A THOUSAND-FOLD THE KIND OF EFFORT THAT I AND MANY OF MY COLLEAGUES WERE CONTRIBUTING ON AN INDIVIDUAL AND INFORMAL BASIS.

IT ALSO MADE ME A TRUE BELIEVER IN THE NEED TO DEVELOP EXCELLENT HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WITHIN EVERY NATION AND EVERY SOCIETY.

AND I'M STILL A TRUE BELIEVER. AND, BY YOUR PRESENCE HERE THIS EVENING, I AM SURE YOU ARE ALL TRUE BELIEVERS AS WELL.

WE BELIEVE IN THE NEED FOR EACH OF US -- FOR EACH OF OUR OWN COUNTRIES -- TO BE FULLY RESPONSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR OWN PEOPLE.

THAT CAN BE AN EXPENSIVE COMMITMENT ... IT CAN DRAW HEAVILY UPON OUR BEST AVAILABLE HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES.

BUT WE KNOW THAT IF WE TRY TO SKIMP OR -- WORSE YET -- IF WE TRY TO AVOID SUCH A COMMITMENT, THE RESULT CAN BE A WORSENING OF THE HEALTH STATUS OF OUR OWN PEOPLE AND AN EVEN HEAVIER BURDEN OF RESPONSE FOR AN EVEN LONGER TERM.

SO WE KNOW AND WE BELIEVE IN THE PRIMARY ROLE OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO BE THE GUARDIANS OF THE HEALTH OF THEIR OWN PEOPLES.

BUT NO DISEASE WILL HONOR NATIONAL BOUNDARIES. IN CASE WE HAD FORGOTTEN THAT FACT, THE EPIDEMIC OF AIDS HAS BEEN A VERY GRIM REMINDER.

AND SO EACH OF US -- REGARDLESS OF OUR LEVEL OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT -- EACH OF US HAS BECOME AN ACTIVE, WORKING MEMBER OF THE WORLD HEALTH COMMUNITY FOR EVERYBODY'S SAKE ... AS WELL AS FOR OUR OWN SAKE.

WE KNOW THAT'S RIGHT AND WE KNOW IT WORKS. AND WE'VE KNOW IT FOR 40 YEARS, SINCE THE DAY THAT IDEA BECAME A REALITY WITH THE FORMATION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

ONE WORLD WAR HAD JUST ENDED, THE SECOND WORLD WAR. BUT ANOTHER AND QUITE DIFFERENT KIND OF "WORLD WAR" WAS JUST BEGINNING -- A "WORLD WAR" AGAINST HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION, AGAINST IGNORANCE AND DISEASE, AGAINST HATRED AND POVERTY, A WAR AGAINST HOPELESSNESS, A WAR AGAINST ALL THOSE FORCES THAT HAVE RAVAGED AND DIMINISHED HUMANITY THROUGHOUT HISTORY.

IT'S NOT BEEN AN EASY WAR TO WAGE. BUT I BELIEVE THE HUMAN RACE IS WINNING. AND ONE CLEAR BIT OF EVIDENCE OF THAT FACT IS THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE AND EXPANDING EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

W.H.O. HAS BEEN OF IMMEASURABLE HELP IN IMPROVING THE ORGANIZATION AND DELIVERY OF APPROPRIATE AND TIMELY HEALTH SERVICES IN COUNTRIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

W.H.O. HAS BEEN A MAJOR FACTOR IN REDUCING THE TOLL OF MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY FROM COMMUNICABLE DISEASE ... PARTICULARLY MALARIA AND DIARRHEAL DISEASE ... AND ALL THE DISEASES THAT CAN BE PREVENTED BY VACCINATION.



THE DEATH TOLL AMONG CHILDREN IS STILL TOO HIGH, BUT THE RATE HAS BEEN DECLINING STEADILY, THANKS TO A VARIETY OF PROGRAMS SUPPORTED BY THE W.H.O.

TODAY, MORE PARENTS AND FAMILIES DARE TO HAVE GREATER HOPES FOR THEIR CHILDREN THEN EVER BEFORE.

AND OVER THE PAST 40 YEARS, THE LIFE EXPECTANCY WORLDWIDE OF THE AVERAGE PERSON HAS GONE UP FROM 41 YEARS OF AGE TO 61 YEARS OF AGE. IN OTHER WORDS, MOST SOCIETIES ARE NOW ABLE TO COUNT ON 20 MORE YEARS OF PRODUCTIVE LIFE FROM ITS MOST EXPERIENCED AND MOST PRODUCTIVE ADULT CITIZENS.

THAT FACT ALONE HAS PROBABLY HAD MORE INFLUENCE ON MODERN HUMAN HISTORY THAN ALMOST ANY OTHER I KNOW.

IS TOTAL VICTORY IN SIGHT? NO, I'M AFRAID NOT. THIS IS THE FIRST 40-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. I CERTAINLY HOPE THERE WILL BE MANY OTHER SIMILAR ANNIVERSARIES ON INTO THE NEXT AND SUBSEQUENT CENTURIES, BECAUSE THERE IS STILL MUCH WORK TO BE DONE THAT WE KNOW ABOUT ... AND MUCH WORK TO BE DONE THAT HAS NOT YET EVEN CROSSED OUR MINDS.

WE WANT "HEALTH FOR ALL BY THE YEAR 2000," AND, AGAIN, EACH NATION HAS DEFINED FOR ITSELF JUST WHAT THAT PHRASE CAN MEAN. BUT ONE THING IT DOES NOT MEAN IS "TOTAL, ULTIMATE HEALTH FOR ALL." IT WOULD BE WONDNERFUL IF WE COULD ACHIEVE THAT OVER THE NEXT 11 YEARS. BUT WE KNOW WE CAN'T.

YET, HERE AGAIN, W.H.O. IS THE PLACE WITHIN WHICH -- AND THROUGH WHICH -- WE CAN ALL LEARN FROM EACH OTHER AND, OVER TIME, BEGIN TO LIFT ALL OUR LEVELS OF HEALTH DEVELOPMENT TO A CERTAIN DEGREE OF CLOSE COMPARABILITY.

THE HEALTH OF NO INDIVIDUAL SHOULD BE IN PERIL -- ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD -- MERELY BECAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT OF HIS OR HER PLACE OF BIRTH. THAT'S THE LONG-TERM GOAL WE ALL SHARE, I KNOW.

BUT FOR THE NEAR TERM -- AND AS A WAY OF REACHING THAT LONG-TERM GOAL -- WE ARE ALL PURSUING OUR GOALS FOR "HEALTH FOR ALL BY THE YEAR 2000."

THIRTY YEARS AGO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF W.H.O., THE THEN-DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF W.H.O., DR. MARCOLINO CANDAU OF BRAZIL, SAID THAT HE FELT HIS "CONSTANT OPTIMISM" IN W.H.O. HAD BEEN VINDICATED AND HIS "CONFIDENCE IN THE ORGANIZATION'S DESTINY" HAD BEEN REINFORCED.

"THE INCREASING DESIRE ON THE PART OF THE MEMBER STATES," SAID DR. CANDAU, "TO COOPERATE IN THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES IS YET ANOTHER SIGN OF CONFIDENCE.

"IF THEY HAD NO FAITH IN THE ORGANIZATION'S FUTURE, THEY WOULD NOT COOPERATE WITH SUCH WHOLEHEARTEDNESS IN ITS ACTIVITIES."

THAT WAS WRITTEN 30 YEARS AGO. IT COULD JUST AS WELL HAVE BEEN WRITTEN TODAY.

AND NOW, LET ME AGAIN THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING HERE THIS EVENING AND FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR ONE OF THE GREATEST INSTRUMENTS WE HAVE FOR PRESERVING AND ENRICHING HUMAN LIFE ON THIS PLANET: THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

THANK YOU.

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